

16 February 1976

Euro Vista

BY RAY ALAN

Double Exposure

SAY WHAT you like about the CIA, it has a fabulous public-relations setup. Not even ITT gets more free publicity. During the last few weeks, real and alleged CIA men have received massive press exposure in France, Spain, England, Italy and other countries.

The French daily *Libération*, which published the most names, is Left-wing without being tied to any party. In fact, its relations with the orthodox pro-Soviet Communists are often rather frosty. The aim on this occasion, its editors say, was to uncover some dangerous political gangsters and oblige the French government to expel them. Leftwingers and Gaullists alike have applauded the paper's "public service." I personally would be more impressed by such public services if *Libération* and the other papers also published lists of KGB agents and their local contacts. That would not be difficult. According to moderate estimates, at least 30 per cent of Soviet diplomats and journalists are Intelligence men.

Some American officials, such as the former CIA officer Philip Agee,

author of *Inside the Company*, for the leaks. But several names could have been supplied by disgruntled Gaullists eased out of the SDECE, the French equivalent of the CIA, since Valéry Giscard d'Estaing became President. Under General de Gaulle, the SDECE was given an anti-American role; Giscard has ordered it to pay more attention to Russia and the Eastern bloc than to Western countries, while retaining its special interest in Africa. The SDECE's new director, the cultured, "Atlantic-minded" Alexandre de Marenches, authorized his senior officers to exchange information with the CIA. His decision was not, of course, announced on television, but it reached Gaullist ears and the SDECE is now being sniped at from the Right as well as the Left.

Libération, *Cambio* (Madrid), *Time Out* (London) and the other papers that have leapt aboard the exposure wagon are consciously opening the men and women named in their lists to physical attack, even murder. "Vicious," say Americans; argue that secret agents know what

they are getting themselves into when they sign on. Like firemen and cops, they expect to run obvious professional risks. That's what they are paid—and given a lot of privileges—for. When their covers are blown they should blame their own, or their bosses', bad security, not the press.

There is something in this. Too many American—and, for that matter, British—agents in "safe" cities affect something like contempt for basic security precautions. They move in the same circles as their predecessors and even, in some cases, occupy the same apartments; alert embassy employees can identify them by telltale administrative details and perquisites; regular diplomats sniff at them rather openly; and their role is known even to junior police officers—who may pass the information on to local newsmen and politicians.

You will hardly believe this, but it's true: A British agent I happened to meet one day in a Mediterranean port, where he was pretending to be of sorts (I learned of his real business from a common